



ANNUAL SUSTAINABILITY REPORT

2018-2019

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Introduction

Tourism is not only a key driver for sustainable economic growth, but also has a special relationship with the Scottish environment and society, due to its unique dependency on quality environments, cultural distinctiveness, social interaction, security and wellbeing. Therefore, we at VisitScotland believe the success of Scotland's tourism industry rests not only on its economic competitiveness but also on protecting and enhancing the Scottish environment, society and culture, which are vital to the brand, the industry and sustaining Scotland's economic growth.

In line with the Scottish Government's plans, VisitScotland aspires to make Scotland Europe's most sustainable destination and aims to be recognised as a leader in sustainable tourism development. VisitScotland will contribute to a more sustainable future for Scotland through taking direct action on issues under our control and influence the opinion and action of third parties such as strategic partners, businesses and visitors, to help drive sustainability within the tourism sector in Scotland.

VisitScotland's *Sustainable Tourism Policy* provides a clear rationale and plan for delivering our aspirations for sustainable tourism.

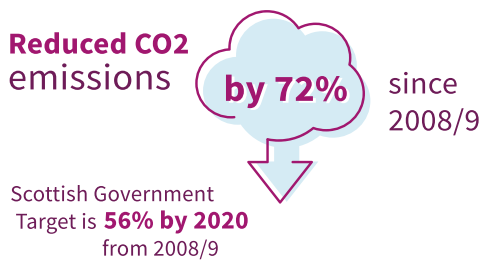
This annual sustainability report outlines the key activities VisitScotland has undertaken in 2018/19 in support of our sustainability policy, as well as the Scottish Government's sustainability ambitions for Scotland and relevant legislation.



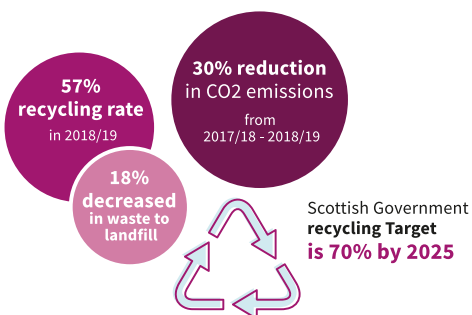
VisitScotland will contribute to a more sustainable future for Scotland

Policy Objectives Performance

CLIMATE CHANGE REPORTING



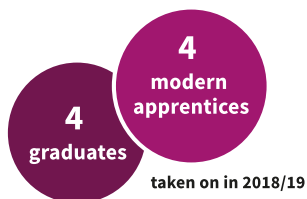
RESOURCE EFFICIENCY



NATURAL AND CULTURAL HERITAGE



IMPROVE QUALITY OF JOBS FOR ALL



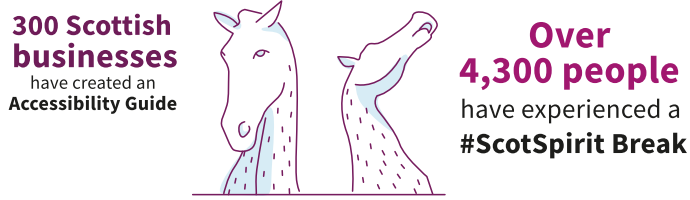
GREEN TOURISM



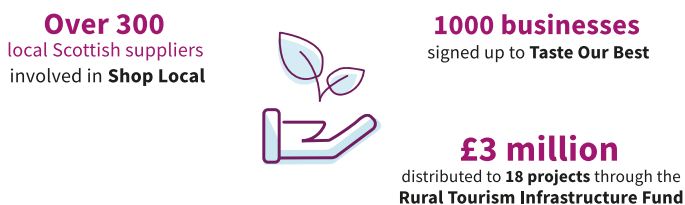
TRANSPORT



MAKE HOLIDAYS IN SCOTLAND AVAILABLE TO ALL



ENHANCED QUALITY OF LIFE IN SCOTTISH COMMUNITIES



ADAPTATION

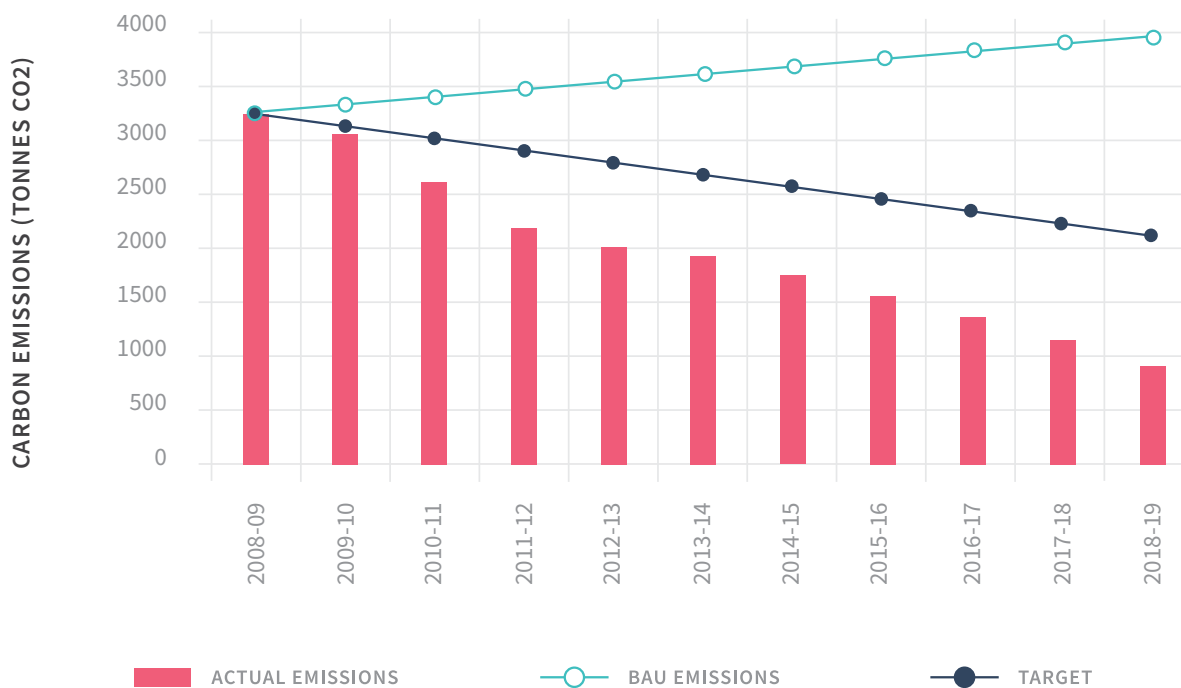
Business Continuity Plans consider current Weather and Climate Impact to provide a continued tourism service



Climate Change Reporting

The Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 requires all public bodies to exercise their functions in a way that best contributes to the Act's carbon emission reduction targets, delivery of climate change adaptation program and overall sustainable practices. As part of the Act, the Scottish Government has set climate change targets: to reduce Scotland's CO₂ emissions by 80% by 2050, with an interim reduction of 42% by 2020, against a 2008/09 baseline.

As of the 31 March 2019, VisitScotland has achieved a 72% reduction in CO₂ emissions, which already exceeds the current 2020 target. VisitScotland annually reports on its compliance with its climate change duties through the *SSN Public Sector Climate Change reporting* tool.



Sustainability Policy Objectives

PROMOTE THE INTEGRATION OF SUSTAINABILITY IN THE TOURISM SECTOR

'We will integrate sustainability principles into all our activities and influence improvements in the tourism sector across Scotland.'

- The majority of the VisitScotland's local offices and iCentres have achieved Green Tourism certification, as part of which consideration is given to overall sustainability activities, including resource efficiency, transport, natural and cultural heritage, and community engagement. This directly supports the implementation of our sustainability objectives across the estate. As of 31st March 2019, 87% of the properties were certified under Green Tourism, of which 35% hold a Gold award and 65% a Silver award.
- VisitScotland has incorporated sustainability actions into its Quality Assurance program since 2015 to encourage and support Quality Assured tourism businesses to undertake sustainability actions, covering a wide range of activity also reflected in our policy objectives, such as resource efficiency, transport, natural and cultural heritage, and community engagement. We encourage continuous improvement and maximizing business benefits through increasing minimum requirements every year. In 2018/19 all businesses received sustainability advice through their Quality grading. The minimum sustainability requirements for 2019 have been increased to support continuous improvement.
- We have implemented a sustainability communications plan in 2018/19 to deliver more consistent staff communication on the sustainability policy and activities undertaken and how staff can support the activity. This will be developed further for 2019/20.

MINIMISE RESOURCE USE AND WASTE PRODUCTION

'We will take action to encourage reduced resource use and waste production, both from our internal operations and those of tourism businesses operating in Scotland.'

- Our resource use and waste related CO₂ emissions are continuing to reduce annually. In 2018/19 we saw a 30% reduction from the previous year. This is due to behavioural changes and improvements we have made through a programme of increasing efficiency, driving down resource use (e.g. energy use in buildings, business travel, and water use), waste reduction, as well as changes within the VisitScotland estate.
- We support the Scottish Government Targets of 70% recycling for all waste and a maximum 5% sent to Landfill by 2025 (baseline year 2012/13). In 2018/19 our recycling rate was 57%, and there was a 18% decrease in waste to landfill. The introduction of Oracle has reduced the need for paper consumption for some internal processes where we should see positive results in 19/20.
- VisitScotland provided all staff with a 'Year of Young People 2018' reusable Keep Cup to reduce the level of disposal cups used. In VisitScotland's Head Office alone this equated to a saving of £4kpa and 417kg pa of landfill waste. We previously used 33,500 (water and hot drinks) disposable cups and 15,500 plastic lids.
- VisitScotland continues to implement the Carrier Bag Charge (Scotland) Regulations across our iCentre network, which contribute to reducing litter and resource use. In the year to 31 March 2019, the VIC network provided customers with 21,850 chargeable bags, which is a reduction of 21% on the previous year. Paper bags are now being implemented across the network.

Sustainability Policy Objectives

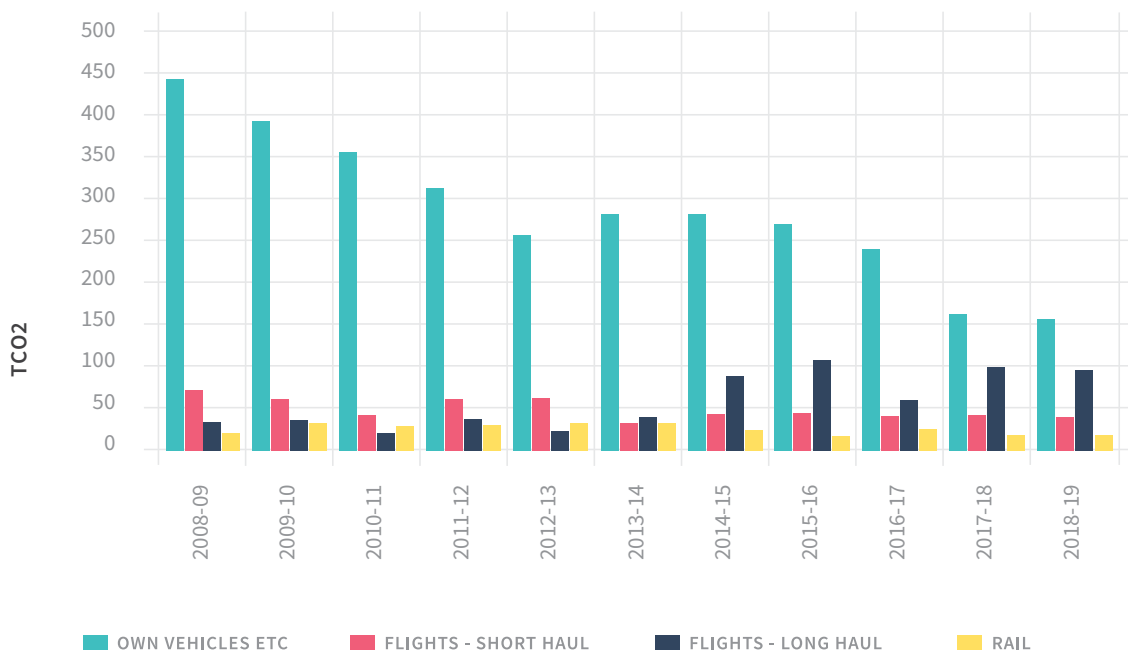
REDUCE THE IMPACT OF TOURISM TRANSPORT

‘Our efforts will focus on promoting a shift towards more environmentally friendly forms of transport (train, coach/bus, ferry, cycle, foot) both to and within tourism destinations in Scotland.’

- We have made a 43% reduction in our travel related CO₂ emissions from the baseline year.
- Long haul flights have increased due to a greater global reach over the period however there has been a large reduction in car travel over the period.
- We have 24 vehicles in our leased car fleet of which 8 vehicles are under 100g/km CO₂ emissions and 6 vehicles are under 110g/km. The remainder are under 130g/km but will be changed on lease renewal.

- In March 2019, VisitScotland staff participated in the Sustrans Journey Challenge. With 68 members of staff logging 1,804 journeys we managed to score 1st place in our workplace size category. During the Scottish Workplace Challenge 2019 staff saved over £3,400 on work related travel and reduced their Carbon emission by 2,288 kg of CO₂, which is the equivalent of driving an average car for almost 4 days non-stop. Through more active travel participating staff also burnt calories the equivalent of 616 doughnuts over the month.
- We have actively promoted the use of Enterprise Car Club Cars for business use, with increasing staff engagement from across the organisation. This activity influences personal as well as work behaviour. Car club cars are conveniently located for our staff in Glasgow, Edinburgh and Inverness or those travelling to these sites.

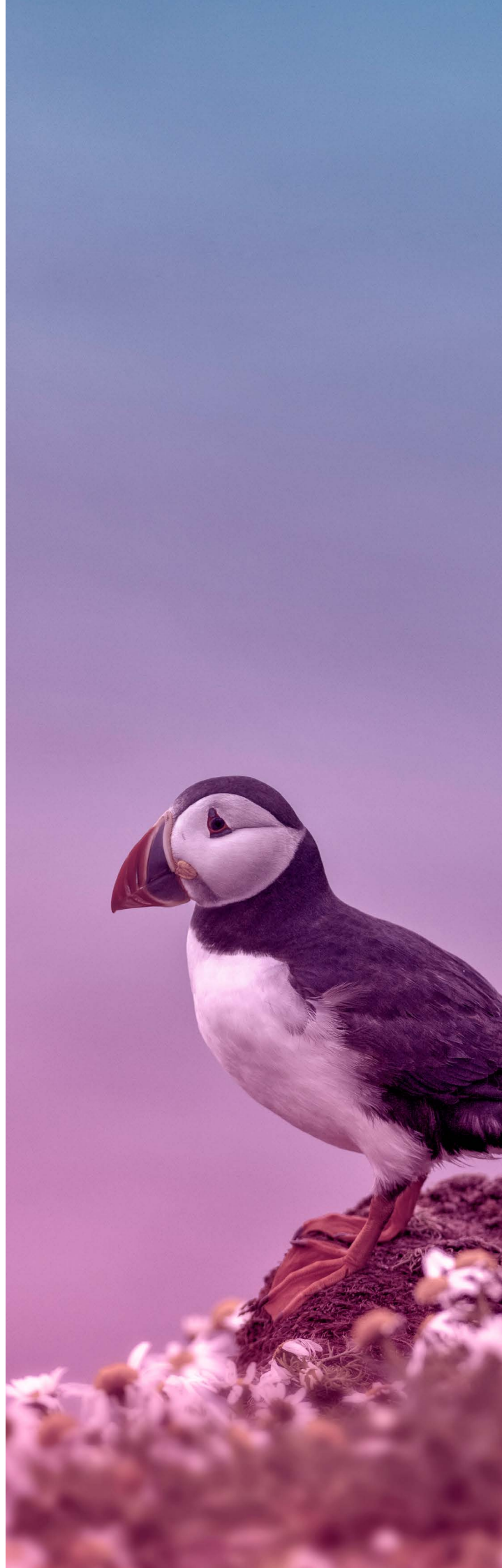
TRANSPORT CO2 EMISSIONS



PROTECT AND ENHANCE SCOTLAND'S NATURAL AND CULTURAL HERITAGE

'We will promote Scotland's natural and cultural heritage to visitors and support the activities of organisations responsible for its protection and enhancement.'

- Through a wide range of channels, we are providing potential visitors and visitors in Scotland with a range of information on Scottish Wildlife and its natural landscapes, as well as promoting the Outdoor Access code.
- In 2017 VisitScotland started working with Plan Bee to adopt Beehives, using the money collected for the 5p carrier bag charge, which we committed to donate to an environmental good cause. We will be collaborating with Plan Bee to highlight the plight of Bees with our staff as well as externally with communities and visitors. In 2018 VisitScotland, Plan Bee, and House for an Art Lover worked with local schools in Glasgow to design and paint the beehives in the spirit of Charles Rennie Mackintosh in celebration of its 150-year anniversary. The sponsored beehives have been installed at the House of an Art Lover in Glasgow. This will directly support the Scottish Government's Pollinator Strategy.
- There are volunteering opportunities available for VisitScotland staff who can take up to 1 day per year to do so, staff have undertaken activities such as litter picking, beach clean and clearing invasive species.
- VisitScotland has a responsibility under the Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004 and the Wildlife and Natural Environment (Scotland) Act 2011 to further conservation of biodiversity in Scotland and publicly report on its related activities. VisitScotland published its *Biodiversity Duty report for (2015-17)*. The next bio-diversity duty report (2018-2020) will be published in 2021.



Sustainability Policy Objectives

ENHANCE QUALITY OF LIFE FOR SCOTTISH COMMUNITIES

'We will support Scottish communities through promoting year-round tourism activity including local accommodation, events, attractions and products to visitors. We will also advocate local engagement and empowerment in tourism planning and management and the wider community development process.'

- As a Key partner in delivering the Food Tourism Scotland strategy, which was launched in August 2018, VisitScotland continues to work with industry and partners like Scotland Food and Drink to increase the sourcing of quality Scottish Food and drink to enhance the visitor experience, as well as support local businesses and communities. VisitScotland's Taste Our Best accreditation, which showcases businesses that provide and promote a quality Scottish Food and Drink experience has been achieved by around 1000 businesses.
- Shop local initiative in iCentres now sources products from over 300 local Scottish suppliers.
- The Year of Young People in 2018 (YoYP 2018) inspired Scotland through its young people aged 8 to 26, celebrating their achievements, valuing their contributions to communities and creating new opportunities for them to shine locally, nationally and globally.
- On-going activity to ensure seasonal and regional spread is considered in marketing activity and funding allocation (e.g. for events, Growth Fund).
- The Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund (RTIF), administered by VisitScotland, supports communities to deliver sustainable, well planned, inspiring, and collaborative infrastructure projects that focus on improving the visitor experience and enable more visitors to enjoy Scotland's rural communities and well as reducing negative impacts on the community. Round One of the funding was undertaken in 2018 with around £3 million distributed to 18 projects across Scotland to help meet the demand of growing visitor numbers.
- Regional engagement with councils and DMOs delivered through the Regional Leadership and Development Team.



Sustainability Policy Objectives

MAKE HOLIDAYS IN SCOTLAND AVAILABLE FOR ALL

'We will help to improve the accessibility of tourism opportunities in Scotland, especially for disabled and economically disadvantaged persons.'

- In partnership with VisitEngland, a new accessibility guide website tool was launched in November 2017. The tool helps businesses promote themselves to customers with specific access requirements. At the end of March 2019, around 300 Scottish businesses have created accessibility guides using this tool.
- Our online accessibility training programme, aimed at industry managers and key frontline staff, provides practical tips, advice and information to ensure they are trained and confident in inclusive tourism. At the end March 2019, around 1,480 employees and 885 managers had completed the course.
- In 2017 we introduced basic assessment of several key accessibility actions within our Quality Assurance visits. These included a business's accessibility facilities, whether they have undertaken accessible customer care training, and whether they have an access guide. In the 2018/19 scheme year around 2,400 businesses were reviewed for accessibility actions, this figure represents 82% of the total number of visits. 41% of these businesses were undertaking at least one of three possible actions.
- As a result of research undertaken with tour operators at Expo 2018, we have been working with Euan's Guide to develop a series of itineraries for tour operators to use to meet the increased requests for programmes that meet the need of customers with access needs (i.e. disabled people, senior travellers, families with young children). We hosted successful Fam trips for Accessible Travel Agents after EXPO 2019.
- In 2017 we started the Inclusive Photography Project to increase the number of pictures on our Digital Media Library (DML) that are representative of the diversity of tourists we welcome each year, for our use, as well as for partners and businesses. Since the beginning of the project we have continued to add more images to the DML featuring models from the disabled, LGBTQIA, Black Asian and Minority Ethnic and senior communities. Our pictures depict many different touristic activities, ranging from museum going to beach walks, to festival going and high-end dining.
- Since 2016, VisitScotland has been working in partnership with the Family Holiday association alongside business from across the Scottish tourism industry to help vulnerable and disadvantaged families in Scotland enjoy a short break or day out in their own country, offering #ScotSpirit breaks. During the last three years (2016-2019) more than 4,300 people have experienced 319 short breaks and 780 day trips in Scotland as part of the project, with more than 80 tourism industry partners having donated accommodation transport of tickets for attractions and activities. In 2018/19 ScotSpirit Breaks were shortlisted for the second time in the Third Sector Partnership category of the Scottish Public service Awards.

Sustainability Policy Objectives

IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF TOURISM JOBS

'We will support initiatives to improve the quality of jobs both across the tourism sector and within VisitScotland.'

Following on from the success of the summer placements within the Career Ready programme - highlighting the development opportunities within the organisation to school leavers - discussions are ongoing as to the continuation of this into next year with suitable mentors within the organisation being sought.

- In 2018-19 we took on 4 graduates and 4 Modern Apprentices.
- Raising the attractiveness of the tourism and hospitality sector to new entrants through work with schools and universities.
- VisitScotland has close links with Skills Development Scotland (SDS) and supports the Tourism Skills Investment Plan (SIP). There is ongoing engagement with SDS and other organisations such as Springboard. VisitScotland supports the key priority 'To ensure staff at all levels understand and are able to respond to visitor expectations' through programs such as Glasgow welcomes, Digital Tourism Scotland, and the Accessible Tourism on-line training.

SUPPORT ADAPTATION TO CLIMATE CHANGE IN THE TOURISM SECTOR

'We will take action not only to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions, but also to adapt to the unavoidable consequences of climate change and support tourism businesses and destinations to do the same.'

- The adaptation needs across the estate were reviewed as a result of Green Tourism Business Scheme reports and recommendations with a view of reducing the carbon footprint.
- We collaborated with Adaptation Scotland to develop the 'Is your business Climate Ready?' guide providing industry facing advice and support and Climate Change Adaptation.



